

EMSA Dispatch

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EMSA's Vital Role in Tackling the 2024 and 2025 Wildfire Seasons

BY TIM REED and KEN PAGLIA

California's 2024 and 2025 wildfire seasons tested the resilience of communities statewide, igniting a critical need for coordinated emergency medical response. EMSA's Disaster Medical Services Division (DMS) stepped up as a cornerstone of support, mobilizing medical teams and resources to 16 major wildfire incidents. Working with state and local partners, DMS delivered emergency care, patient transport, and logistical expertise during some of California's most intense moments since last summer.

A Snapshot of EMSA's Impact

EMSA's efforts since last June reached far and wide. Here's a look at the numbers:

- 16 wildfire incidents supported
- 5,883 total patient contacts
- 1,789 patients treated
- 95 patients transported
- 77,674 over-the-counter medications dispensed
- 23,129 prescription medications provided

Behind these figures were dedicated professionals, including:

- 39 Doctors
- 63 Registered Nurses

- 40 EMTs
- 5 Physician Assistants
- 2 Nurse Practitioners
- 7 LVNs
- 17 Logistics Admin

On the Front Lines: Incident Response

From the Line Fire to the Park Fire in Tehama and Butte Counties, and beyond to the Mountain Fire, Franklin Fire, and more, DMS team responded to calls for support. Across incidents like the Shelly Fire, Lake Fire, and Palisades Fire, the team provided on-the-ground medical care. Whether treating injuries, managing heat-related illnesses, or ensuring responders stayed healthy, the team was a lifeline for communities and emergency crews battling hazardous conditions.

Ambulance Strike Teams in Action

DMS and state Ambulance Strike Teams didn't just treat patients—they moved them to safety. Four Ambulance Strike Teams (ASTs) and one Ambulance Bus were deployed to meet urgent transportation needs during wildfires and high-wind events. These teams played a key role in evacuating skilled nursing facility (SNF) patients from the Pasadena Evacuation Shelter to other facilities with available beds. ASTs were also pre-positioned for potential evacuations in West Hills and Encino, ready to act at a moment's notice.

EMSA also positioned an Ambulance Bus in Los Angeles County as heavy rains loomed. Staffed with five attendants, a driver, and a supervisor, the unit was prepared to provide support during weather-related emergencies.

CAL-MAT's Mission in Malibu

DMS coordinated deployment of a California Medical Assistance Team (CAL-MAT) in Malibu. As the region recovered from devastating wildfires, CAL-MAT offered:

- On-site medical evaluations and treatment for responders in tough post-fire conditions.
- Care for respiratory issues, dehydration, and heat-related illnesses.
- Medications and first aid supplies for both responders and residents.

The CAL-MAT Malibu team demobilized on Feb 16.

A Commitment That Never Wavers

EMSA's response to the 2024 and 2025 wildfire seasons underscores our unshakable dedication to providing disaster medical support. Through collaboration with local and state partners, our DMS-led teams delivered critical healthcare when California needed it most. As wildfire risks persist, EMSA stands ready to protect and serve our state's residents and emergency responders.

Your Voice Matters: Chapter 6 Updates Open for Public Comment

BY KEN PAGLIA

EMSA is proposing updates to Chapter 6, Specialty Programs, within Division 9, Title 22 of the California Code of Regulations—and we're calling on stakeholders to weigh in.

Visit emsa.ca.gov/Public_Comment to review the proposed changes and submit feedback during the 45-day public comment period, open through April 3, 2025.

Chapter 6 governs specialty care programs including trauma, STEMI, stroke, and EMS for Children (EMSC). Although consolidated years ago for clarity, these regulations haven't been refreshed in over seven years—leaving them out of sync with today's advanced practices.

EMSA collaborated with expert committees—including physicians, EMS leaders, and more—to draft revisions designed to provide more efficient care, streamlined operations, and equitable emergency services statewide.

“These updates align our EMS system with modern healthcare and national benchmarks,” said EMSA Deputy Director Ashley Williams. “They're about ensuring top-level care for every Californian while strengthening public safety and uniting our specialty care system.”

EMSA invites stakeholder contributions to refine these updates. Review the proposed revisions and lend your perspective to shape California's EMS future!

For more info visit emsa.ca.gov/regulations.

Passage of AB 2317: Child Day Care Facilities: Anaphylactic Policy

BY the PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS UNIT

On September 25, 2024, Governor Newsom approved the passage of AB-2317, incorporating training in anaphylaxis and the use of emergency epinephrine auto-injectors into pediatric first aid and CPR training for child day care facility staff.

Training in pediatric first aid and CPR is required for at least one director or teacher at every childcare facility. On and after January 1, 2026, child day care providers obtaining initial training or renewing their pediatric first aid and CPR trainings will be required to complete training in the prevention and treatment of anaphylaxis and the emergency use of epinephrine auto-injectors.

To ensure California's smallest citizens receive the highest standard of care, EMSA's Training and Workforce Unit is working hard to develop regulations for this curriculum, to be implemented across all childcare provider first aid and CPR training programs.

Spring Forward

BY DIRECTOR LIZ BASNETT

As spring unfolds, the Emergency Medical Services Authority (EMSA) continues its mission of advancing and refining California's EMS system. This season represents not only renewal but also a time of significant regulatory progress that will shape the future of emergency medical services statewide. EMSA remains dedicated to ensuring that regulations support high-quality patient care, strengthen workforce capabilities, and enhance system efficiency.

A major focus this spring is the implementation of updated EMS regulations designed to streamline provider certification and licensure, modernize data collection standards, and ensure alignment with the latest clinical practices. EMSA is committed to making these processes more efficient while maintaining the highest level of accountability and patient safety. By refining our regulatory framework, we are fostering a system that is both adaptable and responsive to the evolving needs of the state.

Additionally, EMSA is working diligently to support paramedic and EMT licensure enhancements, reducing administrative burdens while upholding rigorous competency standards. As part of this effort, we continue to engage

with stakeholders to address critical issues such as scope of practice adjustments, continuing education opportunities, and workforce sustainability. These improvements will help ensure that EMS professionals receive the support they need to deliver exceptional care in their communities.

Disaster preparedness remains at the forefront of EMSA's priorities. With wildfire season approaching, our agency is reinforcing policies that enhance emergency response capabilities across the state. By working closely with local and state agencies, EMSA is strengthening coordination efforts and refining disaster response strategies to keep Californians safe in times of crisis.

At EMSA, we recognize that effective regulation is a collaborative process. We encourage EMS professionals, stakeholders, and the public to stay engaged, provide feedback, and participate in ongoing discussions about policy development. Your insights are vital as we continue to refine and improve the EMS system in California.

Thank you for your dedication to this vital work. EMSA is proud to support the dedicated EMS professionals who serve our communities every day. We look forward to continuing our efforts to build a stronger, more resilient EMS system.

Dr. Hernando Garzon Appointed as EMSA's Chief Medical Officer

After serving in the role on an acting basis since 2021, Dr. Garzon was officially appointed to the position by Governor Newsom on January 31st. For EMSA, this is a milestone worth celebrating—an innovative leader with unparalleled experience in EMS is now a permanent part of our team.

Director Basnett couldn't be prouder to have him on board. "Dr. Garzon brings an incredible depth of medical expertise and a true passion for EMS. He's a dedicated advocate for building a California EMS System that continues to put patients first."

For Dr. Garzon, this new chapter feels like a natural next step. He sees the transition as a continuation of his previous responsibilities. He emphasized the importance of EMSA's supportive role in the EMS landscape.

"I'm most excited to keep working with the incredible staff at EMSA, and to continuing work on the goals in EMSA's Strategic Plan," he said. "My priorities will be continuing to update EMSA regulations, particularly in specialty care programs, personnel, scope of practice, data and quality improvement. I

also want to focus on state level data reports to better understand the scope of EMS work occurring in the state, and to promote and support the adoption of EMS for Children programs at the local EMS level.”

Dr. Garzon brings a rich background to the role, having served as an emergency medicine physician at The Permanente Medical Group for over three decades and as the Local EMS Agency Medical Director in Sacramento County for 15 years.

His disaster response record is remarkable— 14 domestic missions with FEMA, including 9/ 11 and Hurricane Katrina, plus 18 international efforts including the Southeast Asia Tsunami and Ebola outbreak. Dr. Garzon has shaped volunteer programs in Kenya and Vietnam, advised on crisis medical care and pandemic flu guidelines, and consulted for the U. S. Department of State. His expertise and commitment are a perfect fit for EMSA.

EMSA Welcomes New Chief Deputy Director Gabrielle Santoro

A dynamic new leader joined EMSA in January as Chief Deputy Director. Gabrielle Santoro comes to EMSA with almost a decade of experience advising on state fiscal and policy issues at the Department of Finance. She has worked on the budgets of various state departments, most recently focusing on the childcare and development programs administered by the California Department of Social Services.

“We’re thrilled to bring Gabrielle’s exceptional budget expertise and heartfelt passion for collaboration to our team,” said EMSA Director Liz Basnett. “Her ability to forge partnerships will open new doors to strengthen California’s EMS system, and I’m truly excited to see the impact she’ll make.”

Gabrielle told the EMSA Dispatch, “I’m passionate about supporting the EMS community and excited to use my experience to seek out resources that ultimately support patient care.”

Gabrielle holds a master’s in public policy from the University of Michigan and is an AmeriCorps alum, showcasing her commitment to public service. In her free time, she enjoys time with friends and family, and exploring the outdoors with her foster dog, Morty. Join us in warmly welcoming Chief Deputy Director Gabrielle Santoro to EMSA!

Be a Hero for Our Heroes: Sponsor this year’s EMS Awards!

BY KEN PAGLIA

On June 4, EMSA will host its annual a one-of-a-kind celebration: the EMS Awards. This standout event—the only statewide ceremony of its kind—shines a spotlight on the courage, innovation, and leadership of California's EMS professionals. From paramedics and firefighters to nurses, medical directors, and educators, we'll honor exceptional EMS professionals who embodied the spirit of service to their communities in 2024.

But the EMS Awards wouldn't happen without its sponsors. That's why we're calling on businesses and organizations who champion first responders and the EMS community to join us as sponsors for 2025! After last year's truly remarkable ceremony in the Napa Valley, we're determined to make this year just as special—and we need your help to do it.

Visit emsa.ca.gov/awards to explore sponsorship packages tailored to every budget. We're happy to collaborate to meet your needs. In return, EMSA will spotlight its sponsors across social media and media channels, showcasing your support to the EMS community. Plus, the awards offer an exceptional opportunity to network with EMS leaders and connect with California's top EMS talent.

This year, we're bringing the magic to Anaheim for an unforgettable EMS Awards ceremony! We'd love for you to be a partner—reach out and help us deliver a truly special celebration honoring California's EMS heroes!

Ready to collaborate? Let us know via email at EMSA.ExternalAffairs@emsa.ca.gov.

CONNECT WITH EMSA ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

To ensure you don't miss out on any valuable information, here's where you can connect with us: Facebook: Follow EMSA on Facebook for community stories, event highlights, and experts from the emergency medical field. Facebook/EMSA

X: Join our X feed for real-time updates, industry news, and engaging discussions. It's a great place to stay informed and interact directly with EMSA. Twitter/EMSA

LinkedIn: Our LinkedIn page is the go-to resource for professional connections, detailed articles, and EMSA career opportunities. It's an excellent platform for expanding your professional network within the emergency services community. LinkedIn/EMSA

Instagram: Experience the visual side of EMSA on Instagram, where we share behind-the-scenes looks at EMS operations, training exercises, and the people who make it all happen. Instagram/EMSA

YouTube: Subscribe to EMSA's YouTube channel for educational videos, training tutorials, and comprehensive insights into the world of emergency medical services. YouTube/EMSA

We Want to Hear from You: Share Your Ideas for Our Next Newsletter!

At EMSA, we believe that collaboration is key to our success, and that includes hearing from our valued partners. We're always looking for fresh ideas and content that resonate with our community, and who better to ask than you?

Do you have a topic you'd love to see covered in our next newsletter? Whether it's a spotlight on a particular aspect of emergency medical services, an inspiring success story, or a feature on an innovative project, we want to hear your thoughts!

Send your ideas to EMSA.externalaffairs@emsa.ca.gov.

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